

# DAILY NEWSP APER ANALYSIS

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**CHANAKYA IAS ACADEMY  
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# Iran launches fresh attacks against Israel, U.S.

Associated Press  
DUBAI

Iran launched a new wave of attacks against Israel, American bases and countries around the region on Thursday, even as Israel and the U.S. hammered the Islamic Republic for a sixth day. Bahrain said an Iranian missile hit a state-run oil refinery. It said the fire on Thursday night was extinguished and the refinery was still working.

The war keeps escalating each day, affecting additional 14 countries across West Asia and beyond. On Thursday, Azerbaijan accused Iran of attacking it with drones – though Tehran denied that. A day earlier, the U.S. said it sank an Iranian frigate in the waters off Sri Lanka.

Israel, meanwhile, is-

sued a mass evacuation warning for all of Beirut's southern suburbs as the fighting escalated with Lebanon's Iran-allied Hezbollah militants. UN peacekeepers reported ground combat in southern Lebanon as more Israeli troops crossed the border.

All the while, the U.S. and Israel have battered Iran with nationwide strikes, targeting their military capabilities leadership and nuclear programme. Israeli and American leaders have also suggested that toppling the government was a goal.

The war has killed at least 1,230 people in Iran, more than 70 in Lebanon and around a dozen in Israel, according to officials in those countries. Six U.S. troops have been killed.

An Iranian cleric called



Under fire: A plume of smoke rises after a strike on the Iranian capital of Tehran on Thursday. AFP

on state television for the shedding of both Israel's and "Trump's blood". A statement from Ayatollah Abdollah Javadi Amoli gave a rare call for violence by an ayatollah, one of the highest ranks within the clergy of Shia Islam. There are dozens in Iran.

Israel announced multiple incoming missile attacks and air sirens sounded in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. The Israeli military said it carried out a wave of strikes on Iran's ballistic missile launch sites.

Gulf countries also re-

ported coming under fire. In Abu Dhabi, a drone was shot down near the Al Dhafra Air Base, which hosts U.S. forces, and shrapnel fell to the ground, authorities said. Six people were wounded.

Qatar evacuated residents near the U.S. Embassy in Doha as a temporary precaution and later reported a missile attack on the city. Saudi Arabia said it destroyed a drone in its province bordering Jordan.

Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev accused Iran of carrying out "a groundless act of terror and aggression" after a drone crashed Thursday near the airport in Nakhchivan.

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## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context of the News

- Conflict between Iran and Israel intensified with missile and drone attacks across West Asia.
- Israel and the United States conducted airstrikes on Iranian military and nuclear-linked sites.
- The conflict spread to countries including Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Azerbaijan.
- Israel warned residents to evacuate southern Beirut amid clashes with Hezbollah.

### Key Points

- Iran launched missiles and drones targeting Israeli cities.
- Missile strike hit Bahrain's state-run oil refinery.
- Drone intercepted near U.S. base in Abu Dhabi.
- Israel struck Iranian missile launch sites and military infrastructure.
- Ground combat reported in southern Lebanon.
- Regional countries increased air defence alerts.

### Static Linkages

- Strait of Hormuz carries ~20% of global petroleum trade (EIA).
- West Asia holds major global oil and gas reserves.
- UNIFIL established in 1978 to monitor Israel-Lebanon conflict.
- Iran is an NPT signatory, while Israel is not a member and follows nuclear ambiguity.
- India imports ~85% of crude oil, largely from West Asia (Economic Survey).

## Critical Analysis

### Concerns

- Risk of regional war involving multiple states.
- Possible disruption of oil supply routes.
- Increased role of proxy groups like Hezbollah.

### Implications for India

- Potential oil price volatility.
- Risks to Indian diaspora and maritime trade.

### Way Forward

- Immediate diplomatic negotiations through UN and global powers.
- Protection of maritime chokepoints like Strait of Hormuz.
- Revival of nuclear dialogue and de-escalation mechanisms.
- International support for humanitarian relief and civilian protection.

# India condoles Khamenei death as Misri visits Embassy of Iran

The Supreme Leader was killed in U.S.-Israel strikes; Jaishankar dials Iranian counterpart Araghchi; Iranian interlocutor says Tehran is facing an 'existential war' and that access to the Strait of Hormuz for energy buyers remains uncertain

Kalol Bhattacharjee  
NEW DELHI

India on Thursday condoled the death of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was assassinated in the opening salvo of the U.S.-Israel war on Iran on February 28.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri signed the book of condolence that was opened at the Embassy of Iran here, as External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar held a round of telephone conversation with his Iranian counterpart, Seyed Abbas Araghchi.

The outreach from India coincided with remarks from a senior Iranian interlocutor who announced here that Iran is facing an "existential war" and that access to the Strait of Hormuz for energy buyers remains uncertain in the current circumstances.

"Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri visited the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran and signed the condolence book, on behalf of the people and the Government of India, on the demise of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei," said External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal.

India had so far remained silent following the



**Offering condolences:** Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, on behalf of the Government of India, signed the condolence book at the Embassy of Iran in New Delhi on Thursday. [Aa](#)

assassination of Khamenei.

The conversations between Indian and Iranian officials coincided with senior Iranian officials expressing disappointment over India's unwillingness to condemn the assassination of Khamenei as officials in the External Affairs Ministry expressed disappointment over Iran targeting oil tankers, which left at least three Indian sailors dead. The overall state of current India-Iran relations came up during the Jaishankar-Araghchi telephone conversation, with sources indicating that India is urging for an "early cessation of hostilities" and conveying to all sides that safety of Indian citizens in the West

Asian states and on oil tankers near the Strait of Hormuz is of utmost interest.

**Iranian strikes**

A senior Iranian diplomatic source, however, argued that Tehran's retaliation to the U.S.-Israeli attacks was "precise and deliberate" and was aimed at the military and intelligence assets of its adversaries. The blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, the source said, was part of Iran's strategy to deal with the "existential threat" posed by the U.S.-Israel coalition. He said that Iran's relation with India had been "consistent" and that Iran expected that "third party"

but now that they started the war we are left with no other strategy apart from resisting. We have to resist and that is our only strategy," said the senior Iranian official.

Explaining Iran's position on the situation at the Strait of Hormuz, he pointed to the insurance companies that are backing out of extending insurance to cargo vessels and said, "It is not just Iran's Army that has closed the Strait of Hormuz. He said there was a moral and ethical requirement on every stakeholder to condemn the killing of Khamenei, saying, "We call upon everyone, including India, to condemn the killing of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. That they can decapitate or assassinate the head of another state at will is a breach of law and this breach of law is going to haunt everyone."

Trying to balance the interest of the West Asian states that host more than a crore Indian expatriate workers and Iran, which controls the Strait of Hormuz, India has maintained a cautious approach in the conflict. Against this backdrop, India has reached out to multiple suppliers to ensure that the energy shockwave of the conflict is absorbed without disrupting the Indian economy.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context of the News

- India expressed condolences over the death of Ali Khamenei, who was reportedly assassinated at the beginning of the U.S.-Israel military action against Iran on 28 February.
- Vikram Misri signed the condolence book at the Iranian Embassy in New Delhi.
- S. Jaishankar held a telephone conversation with Seyed Abbas Araghchi.
- Iran described the war as an "existential conflict" and indicated possible disruption in the Strait of Hormuz.
- India adopted a cautious diplomatic stance while prioritizing energy security and the safety of Indian nationals in West Asia.

### Key Points

- Iran retaliated against U.S. and Israeli military assets in the region.
- Possible disruption in the Strait of Hormuz, a critical route for global oil trade.
- Attacks on oil tankers resulted in the death of three Indian sailors.
- Iran expressed disappointment over India not condemning the assassination of Khamenei.
- India called for an early cessation of hostilities.
- India is engaging with multiple energy suppliers to mitigate potential oil supply shocks.
- India must balance relations with Iran, Israel, the U.S., and Gulf countries.

### Static Linkages

- The Supreme Leader is the highest authority in Iran, controlling the military, judiciary, and key political institutions.

- The Strait of Hormuz connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea.
- Around 20% of global oil trade passes through the strait.
- India imports about 85% of its crude oil requirements from abroad.
- West Asia hosts over 9 million Indian expatriates, making regional stability critical for India.

## Critical Analysis

### Strategic Importance for India

- Energy dependence on West Asian oil imports.
- Security of Indian diaspora and maritime trade routes.
- Strategic connectivity projects such as Chabahar Port.

### Challenges

- Balancing relations with Iran, Israel, and the U.S. simultaneously.
- Possible oil price spikes and supply disruptions.
- Risk to shipping lanes and Indian seafarers.
- Geopolitical polarization in West Asia.

### Stakeholder Perspectives

- Iran: Seeks international condemnation of the assassination.
- U.S.-Israel: Security and strategic containment of Iran.
- India: Strategic autonomy and regional stability.
- Global Energy Market: Vulnerable to supply shocks.

### Way Forward

- Maintain strategic neutrality and balanced diplomacy in West Asia.
- Diversify energy import sources and increase strategic petroleum reserves.
- Strengthen maritime security cooperation in the Arabian Sea and Gulf region.
- Enhance evacuation and safety mechanisms for Indian diaspora.
- Promote dialogue and multilateral diplomacy for conflict de-escalation.

# Sinking of ship brings war to region: Sri Lanka, Maldives leaders

Suhasini Haidar  
NEW DELHI

The sinking of an Iranian ship by the U.S. in the Indian Ocean raises concern for the smaller countries in the region, leaders from Sri Lanka and the Maldives, who have gathered for the Raisina Dialogue, said on Thursday. They called for closer communication on the issue with India as a "net security provider" in the region.

Indian diplomats also described the torpedo attack in the Indian Ocean, close to Sri Lanka, as concerning, especially given that the warship, the *IRIS Dena*, was returning on Wednesday from multilateral exercises held with the Indian Navy in Visakhapatnam last month. The External Affairs Ministry did not respond to a question on whether India had raised the issue with the U.S.

"We don't want the war spilling over into our waters. I think it's worrying that this war is coming home for us... we are confident that India will rise to the occasion on this occasion," former Maldives President Mohamed Nasheed said.

Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu has spoken to several leaders in West Asia, including his counterpart in the UAE, Mohammed Bin Zayed. He has criticised the U.S. and Israel for the war in the region, but has not commented on the incident in



I think it's worrying that this war is coming home for us... we are confident that India will rise to the occasion

MOHAMMED NASHEED  
Former Maldives President

the Indian Ocean.

Sri Lankan Navy personnel rescued about 30 Iranian sailors after responding to a distress call, with estimates of more than 80 killed in the explosion.

"For smaller countries, particularly Sri Lanka that is coming out of an [economic] crisis, we haven't still been able to build enough buffers to withstand an external shock if it

prolongs for more than a couple of weeks," Sri Lankan Opposition UNP MP Harsha Da Silva told *The Hindu*. "Obviously therefore we depend on India to work in partnership, particularly when it comes to maritime affairs," he added, pointing out that Sri Lanka was the "centre of the Indian Ocean", where India helms a number of multilateral organisations.

## Indian leadership

In the past few years, India has upgraded its SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) policy to MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions). It also hosts the annual Indian Ocean Conference, houses

the Information Fusion Centre - Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), convenes the Colombo Security Initiative (which includes Sri Lanka, the Seychelles, the Maldives, Mauritius, and Bangladesh), and takes a leading role in organisations such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association. Last month, it hosted the Navies of 75 countries, including Iran, at three major events in Visakhapatnam - the International Fleet Review 2026, Exercise MILAN 2026, and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium Conclave of Chiefs.

Former Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal said the Iranian ship would not have been in the Indian Ocean at this time if it had not been invited by India.

"The attack by the U.S. submarine was premeditated as the U.S. was aware of the Iranian ship's presence in the exercise to which the U.S. Navy was invited but withdrew from participation at the last minute, presumably with this operation in mind. The U.S. has ignored India's sensitivities as the ship was in these waters because of India's invitation," he said on X, adding that India had a "moral and human responsibility" to condole the loss of lives of its guests.

The conflict overshadowed the opening day of the Raisina Dialogue, with about 1,100 of the 1,800 international delegates cancelling their plans to attend due to airspace restrictions and flight cancellations.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context

- A U.S. submarine torpedoed the Iranian warship *IRIS Dena* in the Indian Ocean near Sri Lanka amid the ongoing U.S.–Israel–Iran conflict.
- The ship had recently participated in multilateral naval exercises hosted by India in Visakhapatnam.
- Sri Lanka rescued around 30 Iranian sailors, while over 80 casualties were reported.
- Leaders from Sri Lanka and the Maldives, speaking at the Raisina Dialogue, expressed concern over the conflict spilling into the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- They emphasised India's role as a "net security provider" in the region.

### Key Points

- Location: Incident occurred close to Sri Lankan waters in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- Strategic significance: IOR handles major global energy and trade routes.
- Iranian ship participation: The warship had earlier joined naval events hosted by India in Visakhapatnam.
- Regional concern: Smaller states fear security threats, economic shocks, and disruption of sea lanes if conflict spreads.
- India's role: Expected to ensure maritime stability and regional security coordination.

### Static Linkages

- The Indian Ocean carries about two-thirds of global oil shipments and one-third of bulk cargo trade.
- Key maritime chokepoints linked to the region include Strait of Hormuz, Bab-el-Mandeb, and Strait of Malacca.
- India promotes regional maritime cooperation through SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region).

- Maritime security cooperation addresses piracy, illegal fishing, trafficking, and disaster response.
- International maritime conduct is governed by UNCLOS and freedom of navigation principles.

### Critical Analysis

#### Concerns

- Escalation of conflict into the Indian Ocean Region.
- Threat to global energy supply chains and maritime trade routes.
- Smaller littoral states have limited defence and economic buffers.
- Potential diplomatic dilemma for India between strategic partners and regional stability.

#### Opportunities

- Reinforces India's role as regional security provider.
- Scope to strengthen maritime domain awareness and cooperation frameworks.
- Enhances relevance of India-led regional security initiatives.

### Way Forward

- Strengthen maritime surveillance and coordination among Indian Ocean states.
- Promote multilateral naval cooperation and information sharing.
- Ensure diplomatic engagement to prevent militarisation of sea lanes.
- Enhance capacity-building support for smaller littoral states.
- Reaffirm commitment to free, open, and secure Indian Ocean.

# Transforming representation into real change by 2029

In 2029, India will have the most gender-representative Parliament in its history. The Women's Reservation Act will reserve one-third of the seats in the Lok Sabha for women – the largest single expansion of political representation this country has ever legislated. This moment has been decades in the making. If the next three years are squandered, it will not deliver what it promises.

## There is an immediacy

Representation without an agenda is just presence. The women who walk into Parliament in 2029 will change what gets discussed only if the issues that matter to them have already been named, fought for, and demanded loudly enough to become political priorities. That work cannot begin in 2029. It has to begin now. And there is no issue more urgent, more invisible, or more ready to be addressed than this: India lacks a policy framework for elder care that clearly accounts for women – and there is no political tradition of demanding one.

Gauri is one of millions of women in India for whom this is not a policy abstraction. Her eighty-three-year-old mother lives alone in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, ageing the way most Indian women do: quietly, trying to hold on to her innate dignity, with almost no support from the state. Gauri travels back when she can, handling immediate emergencies and worrying about the rest – like so many daughters and daughters-in-law who hold two worlds together simultaneously. What keeps Gauri up at night is not the exhaustion. It is the recognition that she could end up ageing like her mother the same way. And she is alone accepting that quietly.

What Gauri wants, for her mother, and for herself, is a state that builds the guardrails for women to age with dignity. She wants elder care



**Barkha Deva**  
works on policy for dignified ageing and elder care

treated as public infrastructure, not private misfortune. And she wants to know that when she votes in 2029 for the most representative Parliament this country has ever elected, its representatives will already know what she needs.

**An ageing India**  
India is ageing faster than its public conversation acknowledges. Over 100 million Indians are already above 60 years; that number will cross 250 million by the year 2040. Women will outnumber men by four to five years on average, but those extra years have a compounded disadvantage: lower lifetime savings, broken employment histories, no assets in their own name, and no caregiver when they need one the most. The National Policy for Older Persons (1999) and the Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme address the elderly through a lens of poverty and health, with no gender dimension. Ageing women are simply not a category the systems in India are built to recognise.

The cost of that invisibility is written in the numbers. A study, in 2023, in the journal *Alzheimer's & Dementia*, estimates that 8.8 million Indians over the age of 60 are living with dementia today, a number expected to nearly double by 2036 – with women disproportionately affected, more likely to be living alone when cognitive decline sets in, and less likely to have anyone looking out for them. This is what a state that never designed elder care around women actually produces. Parliamentary records reveal why it persists – the Parliamentary Questions database has virtually no questions on ageing women, there are no private member Bills, or

committee attention. What Maharashtra showed recently is that the state can move quickly when it chooses to recognise the realities of women's lives. In January 2026, the State launched menopause clinics across 580 government facilities, backed by decades of advocacy. The result was that over 31,000 women came forward in five weeks.

They had been waiting, in silence, for the State to name their reality. Elder care and dignified ageing wait for the same decision.

## The need for insight

Political parties are already preparing candidate pipelines for the reserved seats. But fielding women is not the same as changing what Parliament talks about. The women and men who will make the Parliament of 2029 count are those who arrive having read the room – who understand that representing women means representing the full arc of their lives; not just the years of careers and children, but the decades that follow, when every gap the state has ignored becomes a daily reality. That understanding must be built into the candidate, the campaign, and the manifesto – through a census that captures age- and gender-disaggregated data, budgets that report elder care spending transparently, and parties that make dignified ageing a political commitment before the election, not after.

When Gauri votes in 2029, she will be thinking about all of this. She will be thinking about her mother, and about herself, and about whether this Parliament, the most representative in India's history, can build the country that women like her were promised. Three years is enough time to get this right. We cannot afford to get it wrong.



INTERNATIONAL  
WOMEN'S DAY

## Health and Concerns

- About 8.8 million Indians above 60 suffer from dementia (Alzheimer's & Dementia Study, 2023).
- Cases expected to double by 2036, with women disproportionately affected.

## Existing Policies

- Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme – financial support for elderly below poverty line.
- National Policy on Older Persons – welfare measures for senior citizens.
- Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act 2007 – mandates family responsibility for elderly care.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context of the News

- The Women's Reservation Act provides 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, expected to be implemented after the next Census and delimitation exercise.
- By 2029, India may have the highest representation of women in Parliament in its history.
- Policy discussions highlight the absence of a gender-sensitive elder care framework, despite rapid population ageing in India.
- Women tend to live longer but remain economically and socially more vulnerable in old age, making elder care a significant policy concern.

### Key Points

- Women's Reservation Act (2023)
  - Reserves one-third seats for women in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.
  - Includes sub-reservation for SC/ST women.
  - Implementation linked to post-Census delimitation.
- Ageing Population in India
  - India has over 100 million people aged 60+ (Census projections).
  - Expected to reach ~250 million by 2040.
  - Women have 4–5 years higher life expectancy than men.
- Gendered Challenges in Old Age
  - Lower labour force participation → lower savings and pensions.
  - Higher widowhood and solitary living among elderly women.
  - Limited property ownership and financial independence.

### Static Linkages

- Article 14 – Equality before law.
- Article 15(3) – Special provisions for women and children.
- Article 41 (DPSP) – Public assistance in cases of old age, sickness and disability.
- Demographic Transition Theory – Ageing as a stage of population transition.
- National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) – Social security pensions.

### Critical Analysis

#### Advantages

- Increased female political representation may bring attention to gender-specific social issues.
- Opportunity to design gender-sensitive ageing policies.
- Can strengthen inclusive policymaking in Parliament.

#### Challenges

- Representation may not automatically translate into policy prioritisation.
- Existing elder care schemes lack gender-disaggregated data.
- Weak institutional elder care infrastructure in India.
- Heavy reliance on family-based care system.

### Way Forward

- Develop a comprehensive national elder care policy with gender focus.
- Introduce age- and gender-disaggregated data collection in Census and surveys.
- Expand community-based elder care services and geriatric healthcare.
- Strengthen social security and pension coverage for women.
- Encourage political parties to include elder care and ageing policies in manifestos.

# Protecting women's rights amid conflict and instability

International Women's Day is once again in our midst. Observed globally on March 8, the day has evolved from its early 20th century labour roots into a leading platform for deliberating on women's rights, celebrating achievements and demanding concrete action toward gender equality. Officially recognized by the United Nations (UN) in 1977, the day continues to serve as both a celebration and a call to action.

## Rights, justice and action

For 2026, the UN has chosen "Rights, Justice, Action: For All Women and Girls" as the global theme for International Women's Day. While these words resonate powerfully, affirming women's rights to equality and justice, the reality remains far from supportive of translating this theme into a practical programme. The unpleasant truth is that this ambitious call for action is against the ominous backdrop of a world marked by conflict, displacement, economic instability and political uncertainty. Multiple wars and conflicts are raging in several parts of the world.

Relentless targeted attacks by warring nations have already claimed so many lives and caused the destruction of several strategic locations. Those killed include a large number of women and children. What is worse, instead of de-escalation, we are witnessing a hardening of positions on all sides, with no early cessation of hostilities in sight.

What do these conflicts portend for living conditions and rights of women and children? Gender equality is not a privilege but a fundamental human right. But it is easier said than done, more so in a world facing multiple crises in which women and children are the most vulnerable. Research and field studies have clearly established that women and girls suffer disproportionately in wars. Conflict and



Archana Ramasudaram

retired from the Indian Police Service as a Director General of the Sashastra Seema Bal, a central armed police force. She has also served as Member, Lokpal of India

insecurity dramatically escalate incidents of gender-based violence, food insecurity, restricted mobility or forced displacement, disruption of families, loss of livelihood, breakdown of social support systems and lack of access to health care and education. Women trapped in conflict zones are also targeted as a strategy of war. Rape and sexual violence against women have been committed during wars since ancient times to subjugate and humiliate the enemy.

Many women also suffer mental health issues such as depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. The side-lining of women in peace talks and reconstruction processes further reduces their chances of addressing these problems.

## Promises but no progress

Acknowledging the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the UN Security Council, on October 31, 2000, unanimously

adopted the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. It was affirmed in this historic resolution that women must be protected during conflicts and included actively in peacebuilding processes. Yet, the gap between commitments and implementation continues to remain wide. While a few countries have developed national action plans to implement Resolution 1325, no tangible change is noticed on the ground.

In fact, the conditions for women and children have worsened over these decades. Inequalities have become more acute in many places, with wars and political instability further weakening the institutions for the protection of women. The UN Secretary-General for Report on Women, Peace and Security for 2025 categorically states that the world is experiencing the highest number of

active conflicts since 1946, resulting in unprecedented risks and suffering for women and girls. The report adds that nearly 676 million women live within 50 kilometres of deadly conflicts, the highest level since the 1990s. Civilian casualties among women and children quadrupled when compared to the previous two-year period. Conflict-related sexual violence increased by 87% in two years.

Moreover, despite overwhelming evidence that women's participation makes peace more durable, they remain largely excluded from decision-making. In 2024, nine out of 10 peace processes had no women negotiators, with women making up just 7% of negotiators and 14% of mediators globally. This is despite the research consistently showing that peace agreements are more durable when women are meaningfully involved in these processes.

## Rights require action

Women, being important stakeholders as well as victims of war, should be given equal opportunity to participate in talks and other processes. Women's collectives and global bodies should also play a more action-oriented role instead of confining themselves to slogans and conferences. Women and children in conflict zones should be protected from violence and sexual exploitation. In fact, helping them with food, education, health care, financial assistance and also emotional support is the duty of other stakeholders as well. This underscores why the 2026 emphasis on rights and justice is both urgent and essential, making International Women's Day more than a calendar date and a reminder that protecting women's rights amid conflict and instability is a collective responsibility.



INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

## o Calls for:

- Protection of women in conflict zones
- Women's participation in peacebuilding
- Gender perspective in peacekeeping operations

## Static Linkages

- Article 14 – Equality before law.
- Article 15(1) & 15(3) – Prohibition of discrimination and special provisions for women.
- Article 39(d) – Equal pay for equal work.
- Article 51A(e) – Fundamental duty to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.
- CEDAW (1979) – International treaty on elimination of discrimination against women.
- SDG 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

## Critical Analysis

### Positive

- Global awareness through International Women's Day.
- Institutional framework via UNSC Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security Agenda).
- Evidence that women's participation improves peace sustainability.

### Challenges

- Implementation gap between international commitments and ground realities.
- Low representation of women in peace negotiations.
- Rising conflict-related sexual violence.
- Weak governance and humanitarian crises in conflict regions.

## Way Forward

- Ensure greater representation of women in peace negotiations and diplomacy.
- Strengthen implementation of UNSCR 1325 National Action Plans.
- Expand humanitarian assistance, healthcare, education and livelihood support for women in conflict zones.
- Strengthen legal mechanisms against gender-based violence in armed conflicts.
- Promote gender-sensitive peacekeeping and reconstruction policies.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context of the News

- International Women's Day (8 March) is observed globally to promote gender equality and women's rights.
- The United Nations recognized it officially in 1977.
- Theme for 2026: "Rights, Justice, Action: For All Women and Girls."
- The theme gains importance amid rising global conflicts, which disproportionately affect women and children.
- The UN Secretary-General's Report on Women, Peace and Security (2025) notes the highest number of global conflicts since 1946, increasing risks for women.

### Key Points

- Impact of conflicts on women
  - Women face gender-based violence, sexual exploitation, trafficking, displacement and food insecurity during wars.
  - 676 million women live within 50 km of conflict zones (UN Report 2025).
  - Civilian casualties among women and children have quadrupled compared to the previous two-year period.
  - Conflict-related sexual violence increased by 87% in the last two years.
- Women in peace processes
  - 9 out of 10 peace processes in 2024 had no women negotiators.
  - Women constituted only 7% of negotiators and 14% of mediators globally.
  - Research shows peace agreements with women's participation are more durable.
- UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)
  - Recognizes disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls.

Global instability makes this year's International Women's Day theme urgent

## West Asia on fire

India should oppose the U.S.'s attempt to widen the war to the Indian Ocean

Six days after the unprovoked, illegal Israeli-American war against Iran began, West Asia has descended into chaos. When U.S. President Donald Trump launched the war, killing Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, other leaders and at least 160 schoolchildren, he called on Iranians to overthrow the Islamic Republic and take over state institutions. That did not happen. Iran retaliated by targeting Israel as well as American bases, assets and missions in the Persian Gulf region. Satellite image-based analyses suggest that Iran has struck communication and radar structures at seven U.S. military sites. Hezbollah, the Lebanese militant group, also joined the war with rocket attacks on northern Israel. In Iraq, pro-Iran militias have struck American assets in Erbil and other areas. The U.S. has confirmed that at least six service personnel were killed and three fighter jets were lost in Kuwaiti "friendly fire", according to the Pentagon. On March 4, the U.S. expanded the theatre of war to the Indian Ocean by torpedoing an Iranian warship, *IRIS Dena*, off Sri Lanka, killing at least 83 personnel. The ship was in the region for last week's International Fleet Review off Visakhapatnam. If Mr. Trump and his ally Benjamin Netanyahu believed that Khamenei's killing would lead to a collapse of Iran's government, the result has instead been an all-out regional war.

Neither side has shown any willingness to step back. U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth said on Wednesday that the conflict could last up to eight weeks. Ali Larijani, Iran's security chief, has ruled out talks with the U.S. and American media have reported that Washington is considering arming ethnic Kurdish militias in Iran's northwest to provoke internal unrest. This is a dangerous game. It appears that Mr. Trump launched the war without an exit strategy. As the Iranian state and its institutions show no signs of cracking, the U.S. has turned to massive bombardment and the prospect of fuelling civil strife in a country that it promised to "liberate" from clerical rule only days ago. If the war drags on, Mr. Trump is likely to face growing domestic resistance, with sections of his far-right base already calling it "Israel's war". For India, rising oil and gas prices will add to the burden on its economy, while a widening war could threaten the economic and physical security of the millions of Indians living in the region. New Delhi, which initially did not condemn the assassination of Khamenei, the leader of a friendly country, should take a more emphatic stand against the war and work with other powers to de-escalate the conflict. India should also strongly oppose U.S. attempts to bring the war to its backyard.

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS

#### Context of the News

- A major conflict erupted in West Asia after the United States and Israel launched attacks on Iran.
- Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei was killed during the opening strikes.
- Iran retaliated with missile and drone attacks targeting Israel and U.S. military bases in the Persian Gulf.
- The conflict expanded as Hezbollah launched rocket attacks on northern Israel and pro-Iran militias in Iraq attacked U.S. assets.
- The U.S. also sank the Iranian naval vessel IRIS Dena in the Indian Ocean near Sri Lanka.
- The war has raised concerns over regional stability, oil prices, and security of Indian diaspora in West Asia.

#### Key Points

- Conflict spread across Israel, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and the Persian Gulf region.
- Iranian strikes reportedly targeted U.S. communication and radar infrastructure at military bases.
- Hezbollah opened a northern front against Israel.

- The U.S. strike in the Indian Ocean region expanded the theatre of war beyond West Asia.
- Rising global oil prices due to uncertainty in energy supply.
- India faces concerns regarding:
  - Energy imports
  - Safety of Indian diaspora in Gulf countries
  - Security of sea lanes in the Indian Ocean Region.

#### Static Linkages

- West Asia contains about 48% of global proven oil reserves (BP Statistical Review).
- Strait of Hormuz handles about one-fifth of global petroleum trade.
- India imports ~85% of its crude oil needs.
- The Indian Ocean Region carries nearly 80% of global maritime oil trade.
- Article 2(4) of the UN Charter prohibits use of force against territorial integrity of states.

#### Critical Analysis

##### Concerns

- Regional instability: Expansion of war across multiple West Asian countries.
- Energy security risk: Oil supply disruptions could affect India's economy.
- Maritime security threats: Military activity near key sea routes in the Indian Ocean.
- Proxy warfare: Involvement of non-state actors such as Hezbollah and militias.

##### Implications for India

- Rising oil import bill and inflationary pressures.
- Risk to Indian diaspora in Gulf countries.
- Threat to India's maritime trade routes.

#### Way Forward

- Promote diplomatic engagement and de-escalation through multilateral forums.
- Strengthen maritime surveillance and security in the Indian Ocean Region.
- Diversify energy import sources and accelerate renewable energy transition.
- Enhance evacuation preparedness and protection of Indian diaspora abroad.
- Support rules-based international order and peaceful conflict resolution.

# Our stakes are high in West Asia. Delhi must call for diplomacy, de-escalation



**THAROOR THINK**  
BY SHASHI THAROOR

THE war ignited by the missiles striking Tehran on February 28 now enters its seventh day. It's clear that it has shattered a fragile regional order and plunged the global economy into a state of high-voltage uncertainty. For India, a country whose energy security and the stability of the Gulf, this is not "foreign news". It is a direct threat to our national interests and our aspirations for growth and development.

Analysts have been struggling to discern a coherent logic for this conflict. The tenets of international law don't justify it. The bedrock of the UN Charter is respect for the sovereignty of states and the inalienability of their borders: the use of force is prohibited. There are narrow exceptions for self-defence and Security Council authorisation, yet neither condition has been met. To claim "pre-emptive self-defence" against a nation that was actively engaged in the most promising diplomatic negotiations in a decade is a legal stretch. Compounding this violation is the precisely conducted elimination of the heart of the Iranian leadership, shattering the unwritten but long-respected convention that heads of state and government are never militarily targeted in warfare. By discarding this norm, the US and Israel have not only disregarded convention but risked chaos. "I got him before he got me," President Donald

Trump said of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Any future outcome risks being marinated in blood feuds rather than statemanship.

The irony of "Epic Pury" is that its proclaimed objective — denying Iran a nuclear weapon — had, according to Omani mediators, already been achieved through ongoing diplomatic negotiations. Just days before the strikes, significant progress had been reported in Geneva, with Iran nearing a deal to share nuclear weapons, freeze enrichment and hold zero stockpiles of weapons-grade material, in exchange for structured sanctions relief. By choosing the battlefield over the boardroom, the US and Israel have signalled that diplomacy is a dispensable tool to the overarching goal of regime change.

However, history remains a harsh teacher. Regime change is rarely, if ever, achievable from the air. While modern weaponry may possess the precision to destroy infrastructure, it cannot bomb a new government into existence. Destroying a leadership from the air is one thing, building an alternative in a country of 85 million people quite another. The likely result is either regime reassertion under new personalities (none of whom seems likely to turn out to be an obliging Iranian version of Venezuela's Deby Rodriguez) or, worse, a failed-state scenario on a massive scale, creating a power vacuum far more dangerous than the regime it sought to replace.

The consequences of this action are already bleeding across borders. Iranian retaliation has not been confined to the primary aggressors; strikes have hit neighbouring countries that were not overtly hostile to Tehran. These actions, going beyond US bases, have caused tragic casualties among the local and foreign residents of those na-

tions, effectively dragging the entire region into a war they did not seek. We now face the worrying prospect of further indiscriminate retaliation by Iran and its proxies against American interests and civilians anywhere in the world. When a regime feels survival is at stake, the distinction between military and civilian targets vanishes.

The economic toll is equally staggering. The closure of regional airspace and the Strait of Hormuz, have sent shockwaves through global markets. As a significant portion of the world's seaborne oil passes through this choke point, prices have spiked — one hopes temporarily — from the pre-war \$65 towards \$83 per barrel, and insurance premia are soaring. Qatar has declared force majeure and suspended its gas shipments, affecting factories around the world. Iran currently appears intent on widening the theatre of conflict in order to disrupt the Middle East's civil aviation hubs and stall the movement of oil and gas from the region, calculating that the economic shock, plus the damage wreaked on the "safe haven" reputation of its thriving neighbours, could persuade Washington to rein in the fighting.

Uncomfortable questions persist about the strategic logic of unleashing war. Was this gamble for regime change inspired by a desire to create a unipolar West Asia, integrating Iranian oil into world markets under a more friendly government? Such a theory is plausible, given that the stated reason, nuclear weapons, had already been settled at the negotiating table, and because regime change would achieve a number of broader geostrategic objectives: Reduce Russia's energy leverage over Europe and dilute China's clout in the region by pulling Iran and its energy resources into the West's

orbit. But the escalation may not unfold as the United States and Israel expect, and the resulting instability is likely to inflict significant damage on every actor involved.

Iran is estimated to have enough ballistic missiles for a couple of weeks of fighting, though half its missile launches are said to have been destroyed and the remainder are not easy to hide from the "eyes in the sky" of modern technology. How much longer the US and Israel can sustain their barrage is uncertain, but one clue is that President Trump speaks of ending the war in four to five weeks. The threat of American "boots on the ground" seems a bluff, to signal determination rather than real intent. America may accept a solution short of regime change — perhaps a new government willing to seek accommodation — but such a prospect seems highly unlikely in the current climate of escalation. The Iranian regime could survive in a degraded state, prompting an era of proxy attacks, assassinations, terrorism and economic disruption.

For India, the stakes are high. Millions of Indians working in the Gulf now face an uncertain future, while thousands of travellers remain cut off from transit hubs like Dubai, though recent evacuations of stranded passengers have eased the strain. Our domestic priority of affordable oil is undermined, threatening the very growth that fuels our development efforts. India's call for de-escalation and diplomacy is a necessity. Our path to development requires peace and stability in our extended neighbourhood. We must lead the international community in demanding that the missiles flying in all directions stop, before the West Asian abyss grows wide enough to engulf us all.

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- Diplomatic Dimension
  - Prior diplomatic negotiations reportedly aimed to limit Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief.

## Static Linkages

- Article 2(4) of the UN Charter prohibits the use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of states.
- Article 51 of the UN Charter permits the right to self-defence in case of armed attack.
- Strait of Hormuz is a key maritime chokepoint connecting the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea.
- India maintains Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR) to address disruptions in oil supply.
- Stability in the Indian Ocean Region is central to India's trade and energy security.

## Critical Analysis

### Implications for India

- Increase in oil prices may worsen inflation and fiscal pressures.
- Possible disruption of oil supply routes through the Strait of Hormuz.
- Safety concerns for Indian workers and professionals in Gulf countries.

### Geopolitical Challenges

- Intensification of great-power rivalry in West Asia.
- Expansion of conflict through proxy groups and regional alliances.

### Economic Risks

- Higher energy costs may slow economic growth and industrial activity.
- Supply chain disruptions could affect global trade and manufacturing.

## Way Forward

- Promote diplomatic dialogue and de-escalation through multilateral platforms such as the UN.
- Diversify energy imports and expand partnerships with new suppliers.
- Strengthen Strategic Petroleum Reserves to manage supply shocks.
- Enhance maritime security cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region.
- Prepare evacuation and protection mechanisms for Indian diaspora in the Gulf.
- Accelerate the transition to renewable energy and green hydrogen.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context

- On 28 February, a conflict erupted in West Asia after U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran, reportedly targeting key leadership and strategic facilities.
- Iran retaliated by attacking Israel, U.S. bases, and regional infrastructure, leading to a widening conflict.
- The crisis disrupted regional airspace and maritime routes, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz, a critical global energy chokepoint.
- Global crude prices increased from about \$65 to nearly \$83 per barrel, raising concerns about inflation and economic instability.
- The situation directly affects India's energy security, diaspora safety, and economic stability.

### Key Points

- Energy Dependence
  - India imports about 85% of its crude oil requirements, with a large share coming from West Asia.
  - The Strait of Hormuz carries nearly one-third of global seaborne oil trade.
- Indian Diaspora
  - Around 9 million Indians reside in Gulf countries, making the region vital for remittances and employment.
- Economic Impact
  - Rising crude prices increase India's import bill, inflation, and current account deficit.
  - Disruption of shipping and aviation routes increases insurance and logistics costs.
- Security Concerns
  - Risk of proxy warfare, missile attacks, and terrorism across the region.
  - Potential threats to energy infrastructure and maritime trade routes.

# US strike off Sri Lanka bloodies waters near India

A US submarine's sinking of an Iranian warship off the southern coast of Sri Lanka on Wednesday marks a serious escalation of the war in West Asia and an expansion of the theatre of conflict. It is one of the deadliest single incidents of the war so far, with at least 87 sailors killed and many still missing. The torpedo attack on IRIS Dena in the Indian Ocean Region brings the conflict between Iran and the US-Israel alliance to India's doorstep. In a statement on Thursday evening, the Indian Navy said that it has launched search-and-rescue efforts and is coordinating with its Sri Lankan counterpart.

Washington has said that an enemy ship can be attacked in international waters. Once the ship left India's territorial waters, it did not come under the jurisdiction of New Delhi. But while legal restrictions on warfare in the maritime domain remain the subject of debate, several facts about the targeting of the vessel are disquieting. The strike occurred thousands of kilometres from the principal theatre of war. Moreover, the Iranian frigate was carrying sailors returning from a naval exercise, the International Fleet Review, in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has said that the ship was "a guest of India's Navy". Though a warship, it was on a peaceful passage, and could scarcely have posed a threat thousands of kilometres away.

The Trump administration has included the destruction of Iran's navy among its war aims. Yet the decision to strike in India's strategic backyard sits uneasily with the close maritime cooperation that New Delhi and Washington have cultivated in recent years to ensure a free and secure Indo-Pacific. True to his style, the US President appears to have acted unilaterally. The consequences of disrupted shipping lanes in the IOR will also have a widespread impact on countries away from the West Asian theatre. The war is already moving along a dangerous trajectory — apart from Gulf countries in the line of fire, a British air base in Cyprus was targeted, while Azerbaijan has accused Iran of launching a drone attack. India must remain vigilant to dangers that may yet unfold.

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

### Context of the News

- An Australian submarine torpedoed the Iranian warship IRIS Dena in the Indian Ocean Region near Sri Lanka during the ongoing U.S.–Israel–Iran conflict.
- The attack occurred in international waters, far from the main West Asian theatre of war.
- The frigate had recently participated in India's International Fleet Review (IFR) at Visakhapatnam.
- Around 87 sailors were killed, with several missing.
- India and Sri Lanka launched search and rescue operations following the incident.
- The event signals a possible expansion of the West Asian conflict into the Indian Ocean Region, raising strategic concerns for India.

### Key Points

- Expansion of Conflict Zone: The strike marks the spread of West Asian conflict into the Indian Ocean, increasing geopolitical instability.
- Location Significance: The incident occurred close to major global shipping lanes that pass near Sri Lanka.
- Maritime Warfare Debate: Under laws of naval warfare, attacking enemy warships in international waters may be considered legal, but the legitimacy depends on the context of armed conflict.

- Strategic Implications for India:
  - India's maritime neighbourhood is witnessing increased military activity.
  - Potential threats to energy security and maritime trade routes.
- Regional Security Concerns: Smaller states in the region rely on India as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean.

### Static Linkages

- Indian Ocean Region (IOR) carries nearly 80% of global seaborne oil trade and about 40% of global trade.
- UNCLOS (1982) governs maritime navigation and defines international waters.
- India's maritime doctrine emphasises SAGAR – Security and Growth for All in the Region.
- Important Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) in the region support global trade and energy transport.
- Strategic chokepoints affecting Indian Ocean trade include Strait of Hormuz, Bab-el-Mandeb, and Strait of Malacca.

### Critical Analysis

#### Concerns

- Threat to Maritime Stability: Escalation in the IOR may undermine regional stability.
- Energy Security Risk: India imports over 85% of its crude oil, much of which passes through nearby sea routes.
- Shipping Disruptions: Conflict near SLOCs may increase insurance costs and shipping delays.
- Diplomatic Balancing: India must maintain relations with Iran, the U.S., and Gulf countries simultaneously.

#### Opportunities

- Strengthens India's role as a regional maritime security provider.
- Encourages greater naval coordination with IOR countries.

### Way Forward

- Enhance Maritime Surveillance through naval deployments and coastal radar networks in the IOR.
- Strengthen SAGAR framework and cooperation with littoral states.
- Promote diplomatic engagement to prevent conflict spillover into the Indian Ocean.
- Diversify energy sources and routes to reduce vulnerability to maritime disruptions.
- Enhance multilateral maritime security cooperation with regional partners.